

Future scenarios for 2084

1984

In our IDAF we chose the topic surveillance cameras respectively in the book 1984 they are called “telescreens”. The telescreens are first mentioned by Winston in his appartement. He explained that he and other people are not able to shut the telescreen off and that these always spy on them.

Page 4, lines 2-7: “The voice came from an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. [...] The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely.”

Page 37, lines 9-11: “Winston sprang to attention in front of the telescreen, upon which the image of a youngish woman, scrawny but muscular, dressed in tunic and gym-shoes, had already appeared.”

Page 42, lines 15-18: “‘Smith!’ screamed the shrewish voice from the telescreen. ‘6079 Smith W! Yes, you! Bend lower, please! You can do better than that. You’re not trying. Lower, please! That’s better, comrade. Now stand at ease, the whole squad, and watch me.’” (Orwell George, Nineteen Eighty-Four)

Telescreens are monitors, which record what Winston and other Party members do and speak. But telescreens are also able to transmit video material for example Winston had to participate at a sports lesson and the women in the telescreen told him what to do and saw if he does it right. These lines are a reference to our research from today and for our story for the future because we are also not able to shut cameras off, when they are used from the government or other institutions.



Figure 1: Telescreen

In the society of 1984, it is not allowed to think and say what you want. Especially, when it is against the Party.

In a small shop Winston bought a diary to rage against the Party in it. So that the telescreen did not see the diary and what he wrote in it, he sat in a small alcove with his back against the telescreen.

Page 8, line 10-12: “By sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went.” (Orwell George, Nineteen Eighty-Four)

He tried to get out of sight from the telescreen, but it is almost impossible. Even today it is not possible because one camera covers the blind spot from another camera and so on.

To flee from these telescreens Winston rent a small room above the shop from Mr. Charrington. He told Winston and Julia that there are no telescreens in the room.

Page 111, line 7-9: "There's no telescreen!" he could not help murmuring. 'Ah,' said the old man, 'I never had one of those things. Too expensive. And I never seemed to feel the need of it, somehow.' (Orwell George, Nineteen Eighty-Four)

Finally, they found a place without being spied on. Or did they?

Julia and Winston were reading Goldsteins Book in the room above Mr. Charringtons shop when suddenly an iron voice talked to them. They realized that there was a telescreen the whole time as the picture in front of it fell down.

Page 253, line 4-6 / 11-13: "It was behind the picture," breathed Julia. 'It was behind the picture,' said the voice. 'Remain exactly where you are. Make no movement until you are ordered.' [...] There was a snap as though a catch had been turned back, and a crash of breaking glass. The picture had fallen to the floor, uncovering the telescreen behind it." (Orwell George, Nineteen Eighty-Four)

To answer the question: No, they did not find a place without a telescreen. They were lured into a trap. And these lines are the main reference to our project idea. In which situations are we unconsciously filmed, and we found out about it afterwards?

2021

George Orwell who wrote his imagination of the future was not entirely wrong when he thought that there will be telescreens in public, which can see what you are doing. But in today's life there are no telescreens as Orwell described them, but normal surveillance cameras. These cameras are used for security. But then the following question comes up: Where does security ends and invasion of privacy begins?



Figure 2: Surveillance camera

We think that if the material is used for security purposes it is okay. But if it would be like in the book that we are not allowed to think or say what we want it is not okay if cameras are used in so many places.

In our opinion it is also okay, if the cameras are hidden, when the government is responsible for these cameras and not any person or company.

Nowadays, technologies in cameras are at the point where they are using facial recognition in security cameras so that they can catch a criminal faster.

We are convinced that there are cameras we are unaware of and it is difficult to tell where they are used but we found some of the following examples of hidden surveillance cameras on which we are unaware of in the first place. We think that these count as well as hidden cameras. Even if we could be conscious that they could be there.

The criminal police, as well as secret services use hidden cameras. They install the cameras in homes and private properties of the perpetrator. However, these serious invasions of privacy must be ordered by a judge otherwise it is not allowed according to the law. (Wikipedia, *Versteckte Kamera*, 2020)

The police which is responsible for road traffic also uses hidden cameras to convict people who are on their mobile phones while driving.

Once the police forces the drivers to stop, they show them the footage and it leads to charges. So, this person was filmed with a hidden camera without that he or she knew and only found out afterwards. (RTL Nord, *So geht die Polizei mit versteckter Kamera auf die Jagd nach Handysündern*, 2019)

Hidden speed traps for monitoring the speed of road traffic also count as hidden cameras. The cameras are sometimes camouflaged in such a way that they can only be recognised by looking closely. Even though these types of cameras are for safety, if you exceed the speed limit, you will be unknowingly recorded. (Radarfalle, *Versteckte Messgeräte*, kein Datum)



Figure 3: Traffic surveillance camera

In the Corona pandemic, companies use programmes on business laptops to monitor their employees who are working from home to see if they are working. Such programmes can record through the camera of the laptop, count the number of words typed, internet calls made, and mails sent. Employees know about the hidden camera, but if something is not seen, it can quickly be forgotten.

If "Big Brother" is allowed to monitor his employees, he must inform them about it. Furthermore, the reasons for the surveillance must be listed and must be ethically compatible. (Swissinfo, Überwachung im Homeoffice: Wenn die Vorgesetzten zu Spionen werden, 2021)



Figure 4: Employee surveillance

2084

Most of the cameras that are used today are easy to spot. Newest developments in this area came up with devices that can be hidden, some of them achieving this by mimicking animals. For example, there are drones that look and fly like hummingbirds and so called „snakebots“ that are able to sneak into tight spaces and could eventually be adapted for surveillance purposes. There are even robotic bugs in development. Robots that look like real bugs and that can be remote-controlled via implanted electrodes and someday might even be equipped with cameras. The coronation of future surveillance systems is the „smart dust“. The idea behind „smart dust“ is to use tiny computers, which are only a few millimeters wide and could even be equipped with cameras and others sensors to observe the population. If the developers behind smart dust could one day realise their vision, this would be the perfect way to observe people without them noticing it.



Figure 5: Fake hummingbird with surveillance camera

Furthermore, facial recognition is going to be more and more important in the future of surveillance and the usage of our private data. Already, data brokers collect our private data and put them in a sort of digital dossier folder? containing information about our consumption, criminal background and marital past. Christopher Soghoian, principal technologist at the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) thinks that as soon as facial-recognition technology becomes more popular, any device that contains a camera could pull up your information, if it got the right software. It is likely that one day we are going to be able to just point a phone at somebody or even just look at them and immediately get information about that person due to the facial-recognition system, which is built in in a smart contact lense. If a future like this is waiting for us, we are going to lose our privacy because everybody is going to know basically anything about us; from our name and date of birth to our current work- and relationship situation. (*The Atlantic, Even Bugs Will Be Bugged*, 2016)

Our opinion:

No one knows how the future of surveillance is going to look like and even if all those reports predict that the amount of surveillance cameras, especially the hidden ones, is going to increase and we are going to lose total control over our privacy it could potentially come out somehow else. It may be that the amount of security cameras is going to decrease or even, although extremely unlikely, we are going to get rid of all surveillance systems by 2084. We think that the amount of surveillance systems is going to increase, and we are infect losing control over our privacy as it is reported in the predictions above. However, one should not forget that the future is uncertain and therefore no one can tell how it is going to look like. At the end, we have no other choice but to sit, wait and just hope for the best possible future.

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Pictures:

Figure 1: Telescreen

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Figure 2: Surveillance camera

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Figure 3: Traffic surveillance camera

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Figure 4: Employee surveillance

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Figure 5: Fake hummingbird with surveillance camera

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